



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – February 17, 2015
Veterans' Affairs Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee

House Bill No. 6385 – AN ACT PROVIDING FREE ADMISSION TO AND PARKING AT STATE PARKS FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding **House Bill No. 6385 – AN ACT PROVIDING FREE ADMISSION TO AND PARKING AT STATE PARKS FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS**. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP supports enjoyment of Connecticut's state parks by veterans, and we currently utilize a number of techniques to ensure that the veterans are able to utilize our state parks.

One of the opportunities is by way of the disabled veteran pass (life use) that provides access to the State Parks and Forests and is available free to Connecticut residents who have a service connected disability (any percentage of disability). The pass is accepted at all day use areas where a parking fee applies. Presenting it allows free access for the entering vehicle and passengers. The pass holder does not have to be the vehicle driver. Free admittance is also provided for the Disabled Veteran Pass *holder* when visiting Gillette Castle, Dinosaur or Fort Trumbull State Parks. All other visitors, however, will be required to pay the appropriate fee. They are not valid for camping or special events having separate admission charges and may not be used for commercial purposes.

DEEP also offers "in-state" level fees for active military regardless of their permanent state resident status. There is also a Veterans preference in DEEP hiring of seasonal employees at our State parks.

It is likely that this proposal will have a negative impact on the General Fund.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).